



The Durutti Column presents Chronicle **at The Bridgewater Hall**

Reviewed by [Mark Iddon](#) April 2011

The premiere performance of the forthcoming Durutti Column CD 'Chronicle' at the Bridgewater Hall in April, was to journey the emotional depths and potential heights of a band with an illustrious history spanning 3 decades performing in their home town.

Fans of The Durutti Column know not to expect polite melodic tunes, but an experimental array of free flowing layering of meandering interwoven sounds, ranging from delicate and restrained classical pieces to the energetic guitar of the anarchic leaning, but classically trained Vini Reilly, overlaid with a complimentary arrangement of sampled sounds. Their music self consciously sets out to challenge traditional music structures.

The Durutti Column have previously performed (in 2004) at the Bridgewater Hall, which is a wonderful venue and more usually the home of the Hallé Orchestra. The Bridgewater Hall (who commissioned this performance), has a distinguished entrance on Lower Mosley Street, a grand foyer and civilised, if a little stark, bar area overlooking the canal basin. It has a grand auditorium with stalls area and 3 balcony levels and great attention to the design of the building in order to maximise the acoustic performance of the space. Covers dressed the front of the balconies, presumably to compensate for the heavier sound of The Durutti Column from the traditional instruments of the Hallé Orchestra.

The Hall was officially opened in December 1996, and incorporates advanced technology into its structure which sits on earthquake proof isolation bearings (giant springs) so that the hall is protected from all external noise and vibration.



The band took the stage to a modest applause from an expectant audience and performed some songs from Chronicle to a backdrop of photographs of family, friends and past band members. A pre release limited edition CD was available at the venue with a note by Vini explaining the background to the new work which had intended to be biographical but took a different direction during the recording. Vini and Poppy (his girlfriend of 9 years) had parted company during this period and it was a heartbroken Vini that went on to complete the production. Despite the breakup, Poppy had agreed to perform on piano that evening two of the songs that she had written with Vini accompanying on guitar. The music of the Durutti Column has always had an underlying melancholic current, but there was a tangible sense of loss and grief in at least two or three of the new songs most notably 'What Is It Worth' and 'Someone got

away'.

The photographs included Poppy from happier times, the warm smile of Bruce Mitchell (percussion), the playfulness of Keir Stewart (bass, Acoustic guitar, sampled sound), a sullen Vini and a portrait, I presume to be Vini's mother for whom the 'Somebody Else's Party' (2005) was dedicated. At the end of a downbeat first half performance Vini said that after the interval there would be would be some louder songs, and a bit more upbeat I hoped. The self derisive Vini also apologised that he was struggling with limited use of his left hand as he was still recovering from a recent stroke. His determination to continue performing music in spite of the health limitations has been a feature of his career and his persistence is quite admirable.

After the Interval, Vini thanked the audience for staying in acknowledgment that it had occurred to him that some might not return. The first song was 'Sketch For Summer' from the album 'The Return of the Durutti Column' of 1980. This song dedicated to his dear friend, the late Anthony H. Wilson, who had backed Vini to ensure that his music was committed to vinyl at a time when few record companies were willing to take a chance with music that was not of obvious wide appeal. Vini also noted that this was his first working with the producer Martin Hannett, who is credited as having created the 'Manchester Sound', with his extraordinary methods of attaining the particular sounds that he had envisaged. Martin's notoriety in the music business is mostly noted for his production of Joy Division's groundbreaking 'Unknown Pleasures' and 'Closer', but who died prematurely in 1991. The song 'Otis', perhaps the most well known due to it featuring on the '24 Hour Party People' soundtrack of 2002, was a high point of the second half performance.

